

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, March 22, 1878, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. 57 West Cromwell Rd., March 22nd. 1878. My dear Mrs. Bell:

I am afraid you must think me very careless in writing to you, but I have been very busy and had nothing much to write about.

Alec went to a reception last Monday at the house of Mr. John Burns, proprietor or manager of the Cunard Line of Mail steamers. He spoke before the Duke of Argyle, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Shapsbury, and I know not how many others of the "upper ten," and was followed by Mr. Preece who described the phonograph. They say the evening was a great success though the Princess Louise and Marquis of Lorne who had been invited, were unable to come. I have not heard particulars, Alec thought Mr. Gladstone frowned a great deal, and that the Duke of Argyle, though such a little man had a very fine head. Stanley was there, and Alec says that at every one of the three receptions at which he has met him, he has seen every person give up the vain attempt to talk to him, he is altogether too conceited for this world. Alec goes out three evenings most every week, every other Wednesday to the Society of Telegraph Engineers, every other Tuesday to the Soc. of Civil Engineers, every other Thursday to the Soc. of Arts, every Friday to the Royal Institution, every other Saturday afternoon to the Physical Society, South Kensington. He is not a member of the Society of Civil Engineers or the Royal Institution, but goes as their guest and has his seat among the members. Altogether I think he will have a fine opportunity to become acquainted with all the great minds of England, and they with him, Miss True says that wherever Lady Jones and Sir Willoughby go, they find Alec and his doings still the subject of conversation, and that his handsome face, pleasant manners and easy speaking are universally admired. At the same time the Times is full

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of letters attacking his fame, character and patent, describing him as stealing his ideas from Wheatstone, Faraday and Reis, and pretending that they are his own, pointing out triumphantly his disclaiming ten of his patent claims, and skillfully avoiding the fact that they were disclaimed because they had already been published as his discoveries before his patent was filed, and that moreover the disclaimers are of everything except the point at issue, the Telephone. Mr. Scott, you remember him do you not, was out here last night going over with Alec the letters, and will today reply to them. Mr. Scott is in Col. Reynold's office, a right hand man there, I do not especially fancy him myself, but he is certainly most kind and helpful and ready at a moments naming to do all he can to advance the telephone cause. Last night also Mr. Farager called, he has been in London sometime trying to get a chance to show Alec a new idea of his for Autograph telegraphy. Alec thinks very highly of the idea, but says the working out is far too complicated to work, with simplification the system would be a valuable one.

Yesterday I saw in the "Daily Telegraph" the notice of an auction and as I want some things to stand or hang around in Mamma's room, I carried Alec off to see it. There was nothing we wanted but we were after adventures so we drove straight on to the Zoological Gardens where Alec got me a Bath Chair and we went all over. It is the first time I have ever been in a Bath Chair and it is certainly a most delightful mode of locomotion, but I can't say it was pleasant to feel an "interesting invalid". Then we drove to Mrs. Cathcarts, and invited them to dinner a week from next Saturday. On our way home Alec called at Mr. Harrissons and found them all at home, and and just the same as they used to be years ago.

My new servant Bessie Davis seems a treasure, so neat and clean 3 and so thoroughly acquainted with her duties. I never saw better waiting on table, she and Emma are busy house cleaning now, they are today at work in the drawing room and very hard work they find it for the wainscotting etc. is of white wood, and horribly dirty after some months of London smoke and dirt. I think we shall be very nice and clean when Mamma comes. I am busy planning how to make her room very pretty for her. I bought some pretty white tucked

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muslin curtains and shall have them up before the windows and over the bed. I only wish I had time to draw a picture or something the walls do look so bare and my Mother is so fond of pretty things. I am going up-stairs now to begin making the toilet table.

With very much love to you and Mr. Bell and the Miss Symonds.

Affectionately, May Bell.